

***Revisiting and Renegotiating  
Wars: The Potential of Political  
Subjectivization in Anri Sala's  
Film 1395 Days Without Red***

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**Abstract** | Anri Sala's film *1395 Days Without Red* (2011) provides a kind of reenactment of an accidental day during the 1992-95 siege of Sarajevo. Shot in today's Sarajevo, the film revisits and embodies some of the widely circulated images of the siege, such as inhabitants sprinting across so-called Sniper Alley in order to avoid the bullets of the Bosnian Serbian snipers positioned around the city. Based on a close reading of Sala's work, this article will scrutinize how subjectivating techniques of power, during times of war, affectively work to create boundaries between those excluded from and those included within humanity. Conversely, focusing on how these techniques are being questioned within the work, I will discuss the resistance potential of what I will refer to as practices of subjectivization. Eventually, I will seek to position the "war-critical" strategy of the work within a broader context of the late modern war paradigm.

**Keywords** | Anri Sala; war; critical art; siege of Sarajevo; manhunt; affect; political subjectivization; late modern war paradigm.

Throughout the last decade or so, a documentary trend within contemporary visual art and theatre has focussed on war as it unfolds today. More specifically, in works ranging from visual collages to embodied re-enactments, there has been an inclination towards revisiting and (critically) renegotiating visual documents of contemporary wars.<sup>1</sup> The turn to imaging should come as no surprise, given that the image, as pointed out by among others W. J. T. Mitchell and Nicolas Mirzoeff (Mitchell, 2011; Mirzoeff, 2005), has come to occupy an increasingly central role in contemporary warfare with the development of new media (the combination of digital imaging and the spread of the internet is key here) as well as the rise of the kind of psychological, visual warfare epitomized by the carefully designed spectacle of the terrorist attacks in 2001. In Mitchell's words: "Our time has witnessed, not simply *more* images, but a *war* of images (...) Images deployed to shock and traumatize the enemy, images meant to appal and demoralize, images designed to replicate themselves endlessly and to infect the collective imaginary of global populations" (Mitchell, 2011: 2-3). Much in the same vein, in *Frames of War* Judith Butler sets out to demonstrate how the images of the war in Iraq, distributed by official American media during the war, tacitly worked to naturalize the perspective of the US. This endeavour was fulfilled by means of phenomena such as "embedded journalism"<sup>2</sup>, aiming at shaping and controlling the affective responsiveness of the beholder towards the war in general and the enemy Other in particular. The active regulation of the senses and, ultimately, the production of subjectivity, through the circulation of images within an epistemological framework that actively works to either fuel or deaden affective responsiveness towards the Other, then, appears to constitute a crucial part of contemporary warfare.

Faced with this situation, the aforementioned documentary trend in war related visual art and theatre in various ways sets out to create "counter images", questioning the ruling epistemological frameworks and the overall "distribution of the sensible"<sup>3</sup> that seem to determine what we can hear, see, and say, and apprehend at all as human

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<sup>1</sup> To mention but a few recent exhibitions engaging with the theme of contemporary war, one could point at *Catalyst: Contemporary Art and War*, Imperial War Museum North, 2013 (the exhibition was part of the launching in 2013 of a regular program of contemporary art and photography within the framework of the Imperial War Museums in UK), *Conflict: Contemporary Responses to War*, University of Queensland Art Museum, 2014, *Memory of Fire: Images of War and the War of Images*, Brighton Photo Biennial, 2008, and *Signals in the Dark: Art in the Shadow of War*, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery and Blackwood Gallery in Toronto, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> The expression "embedded journalism" refers to reporters attached to military units, and in the case of the war in Iraq it implied reporters signing contracts that roughly put prohibited them from showing images falling outside the frame prescribed by the military authorities. As Butler puts it: "The phenomenon of embedded reporting came to the fore with the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, when it seemed to be defined as an arrangement whereby journalists agreed to report only from the perspective established by military and governmental authorities" (Butler, 2009: 64).

<sup>3</sup> I shall return to and explain the concept of "the distribution of the sensible", coined by French philosopher Jacques Rancière, later in the article.

life in times of war. Focusing not so much on the deployment of images as weapons, however, as on the affective bio-political practices of subjectivization in recent and contemporary wars, Albanian artist Anri Sala's 2011 art film on the siege of Sarajevo, *1395 Days without Red*<sup>4</sup> (henceforth referred to as *1395 Days*), provides a rich example of how contemporary visual art seeks to question and counter the interpretive frames of war.

Based on a close reading of the film, this article will scrutinize how subjectivating techniques of power, during times of war, work affectively to create boundaries between those excluded from and those included within humanity. Conversely, focusing on how these techniques are being questioned within the work, I will discuss the potential of what I will refer to as practices of political subjectivization within the context of the late modern war paradigm.<sup>5</sup> This is to say, when deploying the concept of subjectivization, I will refer to techniques of power saturating and shaping the individual body at a structural level. However, when combined with the adjective political, the concept will allude to the possibility on the part of the individual, particular body of yielding resistance to these very structures, from within, as it were. Being particularly interested in the relation between affectivity and subjectivization, my overall theoretical perspectives will be informed by affect theory in the vein of Butler, Sara Ahmed, and Teresa Brennan, as well as theory on political subjectivization, as this has been conceived by Jacques Rancière and Gregorie Chamayou. First of all, though, I will offer a brief outline of the motive and the context of Sala's film as well as its various structural levels.

### **1395 Days without Red**

Anri Sala's 44 minutes long art film *1395 Days* presents a kind of reenactment of an accidental day during the siege of Sarajevo.<sup>6</sup> In a period of time stretching from spring

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<sup>4</sup> *1395 Days Without Red* was conceived, developed, and filmed as a collaborative project between the two artists Anri Sala and Selja Kamberic in collaboration with composer Ari Benjamin Meyers. The project resulted in two different films, first shown at MACBA in Barcelona in 2011. In this article, though, I will only be engaging with the work of Anri Sala.

<sup>5</sup> I refer, here, to the paradigm of war, ensuing from the termination of the Cold War and the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001. I will return to and elaborate on the concept later in the article.

<sup>6</sup> In the wake of the international recognition of Slovenia and Croatia as independent states, Bosnia, with a complex mix of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, officially declared independence in the spring of 1992. The Bosnian Serbs opposed the independence, and under leader Radovan Karadzic and backed by neighboring Serbia, the Army of the Bosnian Serb Republic subsequently besieged Sarajevo. Their political objective was ethnic partition of the ethnically mixed state, and according to the initial plan to bisect Sarajevo and have the Sarajevo government capitulate, the divided capital was meant to serve as a micro cosmos of the overall plan of partitioning Bosnia. However, much to the surprise of as well the disproportionately well-equipped army of the Bosnian Serbs as the international community, who, represented by among others, the "Blue Helmet" UN soldiers, the NGO's, and the foreign press corps, populating Sarajevo through out the siege, the Sarajevo government did not resign. Thus, the siege, the longest in modern history,

1992 to fall 1995, more than 10.000 people, including 4.500 civilians, were killed by the Army of the Bosnian Serb Republic, who on a daily basis would terrorize the Bosnian Croatian and Muslim population of the city with mortar shells, rocket-launched aircraft bombs and sniper fire. However, even though crossing the streets – not least the infamous main street, Ulica Zmaja od Bosme, also known as *Sniper Alley* – was tantamount to putting one's life at stake, thousands of civilians would weave their way through the city every day in order to go to work, visit relatives, do their shopping and all the other things it takes to uphold a living. Furthermore, throughout the war, The Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra would continue to rehearse and hold concerts, even though they would have to perform in buildings where light and heating supplies had been cut off by the Bosnian Serbian forces.

Shot in today's Sarajevo with a cast comprising of a mix of more or less anonymous Bosnian Croatian and Muslim survivors of the siege and well-known artists from abroad, Sala's work revisits and embodies some of the heavily circulated images of the siege.<sup>7</sup> That is, images of inhabitants, who during the siege would have to sprint, hide, and wear dark colored clothes when outdoors in order to avoid the gaze and the bullets of the Bosnian Serbian snipers positioned around the city. Thus, apart from referring to the number of days of the siege, the title of the film, *1395 Days without Red*, points at the fact that during the war, the populace was advised not to wear bright colors, and in particular to avoid the color of red, in order not to become targets of the snipers. However, as Sala has pointed out in an interview, his work is not so much about representing or truthfully depicting the era of the siege as it is about conveying an *experience* of it. As he phrases it: "To me the film is not about telling *the story*, but about reliving *an experience* [...] it is about how bodies remember [...] and how they sometimes remember in a different and perhaps more interesting way than our minds" (Sala, 2013). Consequently, the film contains no verbal discourse, and if one were to point out a possible dialogue it would be the exchange taking place between the two alternating visual levels of the film, namely, on the one hand, the nervous breathing of a young woman, and on the other, the sound of an orchestra rehearsing.

With regard to the first level, we witness the dangerous journey through the city undertaken by the young female protagonist, played by Spanish actress Maribel Verdú. Running, stopping, breathing heavily, listening for the sudden shots of snipers,

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protracted till the bombing of the Bosnian Serbs by NATO in the fall of 1995 (cf. Andreas, 2008: 1-41). See also Maček, 2009.

<sup>7</sup> As noted by Peter Andreas (Andreas, 2008: ix), the battle for Sarajevo was one of the most internationalized sieges ever, and between 1992 and 1996, foreign journalists would flock to the city in order to broadcast the conflict live across the globe. Accordingly, one only has to conduct a quick Google search with the words "Siege of Sarajevo" in order to encounter a massive number of images documenting the siege.

preparing herself to continue, and abruptly taking off again, she zigzags her way down Sniper Alley, sometimes accompanied by other pedestrians, but most of the time on her own. At the other visual level of the film we encounter a remake of the earlier mentioned Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra, who, under the guidance of American composer Benjamin Ari Meyers, is busy rehearsing a certain section of Tchaikovsky's last work, the Symphony no. 6 in b minor (dubbed *The Pathétique* by the composer's brother). This highly emotional symphony, that has been speculated to forebode Tchaikovsky's death nine days after the premiere of the piece, seems an apt incidental music to the events pictured in the film. Doubling the hesitant rhythm of the female protagonist – starting, stopping, starting over again – the music of the rehearsing orchestra spills over into the level of the female protagonist, thus combining her nervous breathing with the tones of Tchaikovsky.



1395 Days Without Red (video still), 2011. A film by Anri Sala.  
In collaboration with Liria Begeja. From a project by Sejla Kamberic and Anri Sala in  
collaboration with Ari Benjamin Meyers

The two visual levels, then, are ultimately held together by *sound* and *rhythm*. In the same vein, the dramaturgical structure of the film is modeled according to a *rhythmic* principle of repetition rather than a linear, plot-driven narrative. As for the female protagonist, we never learn where she is headed or where she ends up at the end of the film, when she does, in fact, reach a building that might or might not be her final destination. Instead, we are offered an in-depth study of the repeated bodily gestures

that slowly pushes her forward in the charged territory of the city. Likewise, we never get to experience the music of the orchestra in an uninterrupted flow. What is at our disposal, however, are short interrupted sequences, rehearsed and refined over and over again. Furthermore, the fact that the final image of the film – branches without leaves slowly changing colors – is identical to the first image of the film, suggests a loop structure rather than a rounded off narrative. Thus abandoning the Aristotelian ideal of a linear story with a beginning, middle and an end in favor of a fragmented structure based on a rhythm defined by repetition and subtle displacements, Sala sets out to revisit our collective memory of the siege of Sarajevo. More specifically, he scrutinizes how this very memory is shaped by among others the aforementioned photographic images of the besieged population and the bodily remembrance of those survivors taking part in the film.

### **The Transmission of Fear and the Shaping of Bodies**

In the following, I will seek to demonstrate how the affects constituting the atmosphere of the space in *1395 Days* literally shape the choreographies of as well as the relations between the bodies moving through the city. My analysis will be predicated on the assumption that the body, the visceral, material body, that is, can be viewed as a stage for the affectively transmitted practices of subjectivization going on in situations in general, and in the war infected space of the film in particular. Before turning to the analysis, however, I should clarify that when deploying the concept of affect, I will be drawing on an understanding of affect as emotion producing forces found in those intensities that pass body to body.<sup>8</sup> This to say, I will be drawing on an understanding that assumes that, as preeminently social, affects preexist us and circulate among as well as through bodies rather than being confined within self-contained “feeling subjects”. Thus passing through networks of bodies that all have the capacity to act as well as to be acted upon, affectivity can be termed a relational force that is intrinsically linked to the body and to bodily sensations. As Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth put it in *The Affect Reader*: “Affect [...] is the name we give to those forces – visceral forces, beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing [...] Indeed, affect is persistent proof of a body’s never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world’s obstinacies and rhythms, its refusal as much as its invitations” (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010: 1). At once intimate and impersonal, then, affect is situated at the intersection of inside and outside, individual and collective, body and mind. And, as closely intertwined with and highly mediated by political power structures, it works,

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<sup>8</sup> In this understanding of affect, I am drawing on the writings of amongst others Massumi (1995: 83-109), Brennan (2004) and Butler (2009: 33-63).

among other things, to create bonds and boundaries between individual and collective bodies in order to, ultimately, produce subjectivities.

With regard to the level of *1395 Days* picturing the journey of the female protagonist through the city, it is saturated by an atmosphere charged with *fear*. Except for the people who every now and then will cross the streets at high speed, large parts of the city seem deserted, deprived of life. Yet, the snipers make themselves strongly felt, and the fact that we never get to *see* them, but, like the Sarajevans depicted, are only allowed to *hear* them (that is, the shots fired by them), only intensifies the sense of fear. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, cultural critic Sara Ahmed has pursued, in a thought-provoking way, precisely the relation between fear and visibility. Scrutinizing how structures of power are intrinsically linked to emotions and how the cultural politics of emotions in various ways work to shape bodies and worlds, she offers a conception of fear emphasizing the aspect of the strategic transmission of this very emotion.<sup>9</sup> More specifically, questioning the well-known model of fear as having an *object* as opposed to anxiety, she suggests that fear is linked to an object, which may *pass us by* rather than arrive in the shape of an identifiable object ready to be arrested by our vigilant gaze. That is, according to Ahmed, the object of fear approaching us can be defined as being “not quite present”. This lack of a stable object only enhances the sense of fear and renders the world a space where openings towards others are considered of uttermost danger. Furthermore, anticipating hurt and injury, fear forecloses the possibility that the future might turn out differently than the fearful present. In the words of Ahmed: “Fear projects us from the present into a future. But the feeling of fear presses us into that future as an intense bodily experience in the present” (Ahmed, 2004: 65).

In *1395 Days*, the lack of an object of fear in the shape of a visible adversary seems to be a deliberate strategy of transmitting fear in space, on the part of the Bosnian Serbian army. Hidden and invisible as they are, the snipers, who have become part and parcel of Sarajevo’s everyday life, cannot be captured by the gaze of the besieged population. They are *not quite present*, as it were, yet their deadly bullets might pass their victims by or indeed strike them at any given time. The fact that the population, in contrast, is perpetually exposed to the gaze and to the unpredictable movements of the snipers renders the former extremely vulnerable and endows the space with an atmosphere thick of fear. This condition is reinforced even further in the film by the behaviour of the camera, which, as it were, replicates the “surveillance theme”. Sometimes following the female protagonist from close behind, sometimes

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<sup>9</sup> Ahmed prefers to speak about emotions rather than affect, but her definition of emotions as subject-producing social and cultural practices resonates with the definition of affect described above.

following her from the side, while literally trying to creep inside her skin by means of various zoom techniques, and sometimes shooting totals of her from the bird's eye-view, that is, from the sniper's perspective, the camera imposes itself onto her in much the same way as does the omnipresent fear working around, on and in her body. However, there is more to this than the claustrophobia and the fear experienced by the protagonist. Indeed, it seems to be the overall circulation of fear between moving and temporarily halting bodies that plays the lead in Sala's work. This assumption is underscored by the fact that every now and again the camera will set out on small detours, moving away from the female protagonist in order to seemingly aimlessly follow the movements of now this, now that person passing by. What we get to experience through these detours, through this "unfaithfulness" of the camera to the protagonist, however, is the *transmission* of fear in space, the jumping of fear from body to body, as it were. While thus approaching the individuals moving through space as nodal points in an all-encompassing affective network rather than as self-containing entities, the fear unleashed on the besieged population works as a trans-individual force, coercing the bodies in space to move according to the same abrupt, fear-driven rhythm of starting, stopping, and starting over again.

As the philosopher Teresa Brennan points out in *The Transmission of Affect*, fear works much the same way as does non-rhythmic, dissonant sound in so far as both separate and lead people to stand apart from each other. Rhythm, on the other hand, may have a unifying role in affective exchanges. And, as she further notes: "The rhythmic aspects of behavior at a gathering are critical in both establishing and enhancing a sense of collective purpose and common understanding" (Brennan, 2004: 70). In the case of *1395 Days*, the soundscape, comprised of a combination of shots, the nervous breathing of the protagonist, and the sound of the orchestra rehearsing seems to be structured according to the dissonant, unpredictable rhythm of war. That is, a rhythm causing the subjects moving through the besieged city to come apart rather than come together. Accordingly, a conspicuous feature of the film is not only the literal lack of dialogue but the overall lack of communication taking place between the subjects moving through the streets, the lacking sense of a community caring for each other and going through the unbearable conditions of being exposed to snipers and shells nonstop. Thus, when clustering up at street corners and intersections trying to work out just the right moment for crossing the street, the inhabitants do not speak, they do not look at each other, nor do they offer to help each other. Instead, in their permanent state of risk assessment, they seem to be completely on their own.

This sense of solitude, this experience of being cut off from one's fellows, is further emphasized by the sequences of complete silence that every now and again will



interrupt the musical parts of the film as well as the parts transmitting the sounds of the city and the bodies moving through it. The brief encounter between the protagonist and a young man is a case in point. He has just sprinted across Sniper Alley, she is plucking up courage to do the same. While he is bent forward, trying to catch his breath, their eyes meet, and the sound of their fearful breathing is foregrounded. However, even though they share a condition of extreme precariousness, they guard themselves off from each other rather than opening themselves up. The thick sense of fear circulating in space has obviously seeped into them, and in effect it works to create boundaries, urging them to look away from each other and start moving in different directions. In accord with the observations of Ahmed, openings towards the world in general and the unknown Other in particular are indeed considered dangerous in a space as charged with fear as this. In fact, the possibility of social bonding or of imagining a future different to the fearful present does not seem to be an option at all. With respect to the question of silence, it is symptomatic that a sequence of complete silence sets in immediately after the young man has turned away and the protagonist is left to cross the junction on her own. Blocking out her sense of hearing, the silence inserted, effect-fully conveys the woman's nightmarish experience of being completely on her own, of being precluded from contact with the surrounding world and her fellow beings.



1395 Days Without Red (video still), 2011. A film by Anri Sala.  
In collaboration with Liria Begeja. From a project by Sejla Kamberic and Anri Sala in collaboration with Ari Benjamin Meyers

As French philosopher Grégoire Chamayou posits in the book *Manhunts*, being constantly on the watch and cut off from your fellows is what characterizes the hunted animal, the *prey*. In this sense, being hunted animalizes humans. Engaging with case studies spanning from slave hunts in ancient Greece to today's hunts on illegal asylum seekers, Chamayou notes that "The history of man-hunting is [...] a history not only of the techniques of tracking and capture but also of procedures of exclusion, of lines of demarcation drawn within the human community in order to define the humans who can be hunted" (Chamayou, 2012: 2). Furthermore, he defines the predator-prey-relationship as being fundamentally asymmetric. More concretely, as opposed to the modern ideal of war as a duel situation in which two equals – both willing to put their life at stake – are confronted, the hunt designates a situation where the subject-cast-as-prey is not acknowledged as an equal, let alone as a member of human community. Instead, he is considered a species free for everybody to track down and eventually kill.

Returning to *1395 Days*, this seems to be an apt description of the life conditions of the besieged population, depicted in the film. Reduced to the status of prey, they move solitarily and fearfully about, unable to face the predator, that is, the sniper, who, to be sure, will shoot them down as rabbits, as soon as he gets the chance. However, as Chamayou further points out, since the distinction between the predator and his prey is not inscribed in nature, the hunting relationship is always susceptible to a reversal of positions. The fact that the prey – because it is fundamentally *not* animal but indeed human – may contest its exclusion from humanity in order to eventually overturn the designated positions is, in fact, what defines manhunting. With regard to the question as of how a political subjectivity can be constituted in a situation where one is reduced to prey, Chamayou notes, though, that a simple reversal of positions will only allow us to change the roles and not the fundamental structure as such of the predator-prey relationship. That is, if the prey were to transcend its status as prey and begin a moment of liberation, it would have to ultimately move beyond the hunting schema. "It is not a matter of *inverting* the relationships of predation", Chamayou thus claims, "but of *abolishing* them" (Chamayou, 2012: 77).

While thus raising the problem of the evocation of a political subjectivity in the face of the predator-prey-relationship, Chamayou is surprisingly non-elaborate when it comes to defining how a process of political subjectivization could be brought about. Furthermore, to me, the possibility of moving *beyond* the hunting scheme as such seems rather unlikely, given the weight and the stability of the power structures in the examples of manhunts provided by Chamayou. In my opinion, then, it would make more sense – not least in the case of *1395 Days* – to think about how one could envisage a process of political subjectivization that, as it were, acknowledges the

impossibility of placing itself *outside* the oppressive social order. The writings of French philosopher Jacques Rancière, who in numerous works has been engaged with the very question of political subjectivization, might help us here.

Departing from the notion of the “distribution of the sensible”, that is, the idea of a general law implicitly governing ways of perception and thereby what is apprehendable to the senses, Rancière terms the order governing the social *la police*, claiming that it constitutes a certain distribution of the sensible. A distribution, that is, that aiming at organizing social bodies according to certain hierarchies, functions and qualifications, ultimately decides and sustains the line between whom and what appear as visible, sayable, and thinkable within human community. Conversely, predicated on the idea that any social order presupposes a basic equality, *la politique* may interrupt the order of *la police*. More to the point, within temporary public events, it can confront the logic of *la police* with the logic of equality, thereby contesting and possibly reconfiguring the distribution of the sensible. Rancière refers to such clashes of logics as “scenes of dissensus”, and according to him, political subjectivities may appear as singular effects of these very scenes. This is to say, political subjectivity is not founded in an a priori ontological status, and like *la politique* it does not have a sphere of its own outside the order of *la police*. Accordingly, it is brought about through the temporary interruption of the order of *la police* and, not least, through the *disidentification* with the assigned identity positions within that very order. Political subjectivization, then, is not a matter of embracing stable identities; instead, it refers to a persistent practice of producing spaces between the identity provided by the order of *la police* and of a new political subjectivity, yet to come. As Rancière has it: “Political subjectivization is the enactment of equality – or the handling of a wrong – by people who are together to the extent that they are between. It is a crossing of identities, relying on a crossing of names: names that link the name of a group or class to the name of no group or no class, a being to a nonbeing or a not-yet-being” (Rancière, 1992: 61).<sup>10</sup>

In the following, I will pursue how the rehearsal situation of the orchestra can be viewed as a political act, that is, as an act potentially leading to processes of political subjectivization.

### **Temporary Communities and Practices of Political Subjectivization**

As mentioned earlier, the orchestra depicted in *1395 Days* is modelled on the existing Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra, who throughout the war would carry on with their musical activities. In the film, the orchestra is pictured in the middle of a rehearsal

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<sup>10</sup> For further reading, see for instance Rancière, 1998, 2001, 2004.

situation and placed inside a building, through which people continually come and go in order to listen to the music. As opposed to the dispersed bodies moving through the city, the orchestra seems to constitute an organic unity in which everybody, every instrument that is, has its place. Under the guidance of the conductor, played by American composer, Ari Benjamin Meyers, the orchestra members are shown carefully practicing a certain section of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* over and over again. With some of them dressed in warm overcoats the film alludes to the fact that during the siege, heat and light supplies had been cut off in great parts of Sarajevo – a condition that led to public philharmonic concerts lit by candle light.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the detail that in the film some of the seats reserved for the orchestra are empty arguably refers to the seven orchestra members of the Sarajevo Philharmonic who were killed during the war.<sup>12</sup> As such, the reenactment of the rehearsing orchestra within the framework of the film could be read as a way of commemorating; that is, as a kind of memorial concert held in honour of the victims of the siege or, perhaps better, of victims of war in general. In line with this, the choice of music for the film seems no coincidence, considering that exactly the *Pathétique* by Tchaikovsky has been used in various contexts for commemorating war. For instance, as pointed out by Jeremy Hicks (Hicks, 2012: 44-78), the piece was used frequently throughout the Cold War period in Soviet newsreels and documentaries on the Holocaust.

However, the aspect of commemoration should not overshadow the fact that in the “here and now” of the film, the act of attending the rehearsal and of setting out on the journey through the city to the rehearsal space is tantamount to putting one's life on the line. Yet, the orchestra members have undertaken the journey and are now gathered in the building, busy evoking the tones of Tchaikovsky. This is to say, even though faced with a situation of persistent danger, the orchestra members depicted in the film insist on their ability to engage with that surplus value that music and art represent. Consequently, it appears that within the rehearsal space, the sense of community, so conspicuously absent in the rest of the film, is evoked. More concretely, during the rehearsal the dispersed sounds of the different instruments are brought together, forming a meaningful entity. Likewise, the effect of the abrupt rhythm of starting, stopping, and starting over again does not lead to separation and fear, as was the case for the bodies moving through the city. Quite on the contrary, in the rehearsal room, the effect of the rhythm is – to rephrase the words of Teresa Brennan – to create a sense of working towards a collective purpose and of sharing a common understanding. We thus witness how, by paying close attention to the signs of the conductor and by

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Itano, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Itano, 2010.

listening to and waiting for each other, the orchestra members communicate through the music, and ultimately how a temporary community is brought about due to the affective exchanges taking place in the rehearsal situation.

By thus turning *the rhythm of war*, that otherwise control their bodies, into music, the orchestra members depicted in the film manage to temporarily transgress their particular and material life conditions and not least the identity as prey that has been assigned to them. Instead of being cut off from their fellows, as is the case for the hunted animal, they come together as a polyphonic community, ultimately gesturing, I would contend, towards a transcending of ethnic, social, and political markers. Thus, the fact that Sala and Meyers have chosen *not* to use the music employed in the film to support a particular ethnic identity (by for instance having the orchestra play a folkloristic tune associated with this or that Bosnian Croatian or Muslim community), but have instead decided to include a symphony of a Russian composer, indicates their interest and investment in the uniting power of music. In other words, the emphasis put on the music's universal appeal and lack of interest in local political affairs appears to evoke a utopian image of a community, capable of encompassing a multiplicity of ethnic, social, and political identities. Turning this point somewhat around, however, I would suggest that even though the theme of the music is not tied to a particular political agenda, the musicians are depicted as nonetheless engaging in a highly political act. More to the point, by insisting on their capacity to play music and to share music with others, they disidentify with the status of prey that has been assigned to them to ultimately interrupt the logic of the Bosnian Serbian forces that have imposed this very status on them. Comparable to Rancière's notion of *la police*, the logic of the Bosnian Serbs constitutes a certain distribution of the sensible that has the Bosnian Croats and Muslims fall outside the branch of humanity. However, by interrupting this logic, and by insisting that they are *not* animals, but indeed human, the orchestra members discretely gesture towards the basic equality between humans posited by Rancière as well as the fact that the distinction between predator and prey is a construction susceptible to change rather than a given thing. In that respect, the rehearsal situation can be viewed as a "scene of dissensus" in which the orchestra is shown contesting the logic of *la police* from within the "prey position", while at the same time asserting the logic of human equality. This clash of logics paves the way for a reconfiguration of the sensible, however short termed it may be, allowing for those deemed as non-human to step forward as beings demanding to be seen, heard, and apprehended as humans. It paves the way for processes of political subjectivization, for the production of spaces positioned between, on the one hand, the (prey) identities prescribed by *la police* and, on the other hand, new political subjectivities yet to come.

To sum up, with regard to the two visual levels of *1395 Days* we can say that whereas the first level focuses on the way bodies become scenes for practices of subjectivization, partly by means of the circulation in space of fear-related affects, the other level points at how affective exchanges combined with clashes of logics concerning the distribution of the sensible might create a sense of community and enable the emergence of practices of political subjectivization. Practices, that is, that are never settled, but have to be carried out in singular events, again, and again, and again. However, rather than being distinguished from each other, the two levels of the film appear to be imbricated in one another. More concretely, every now and again the music of the rehearsing orchestra will sound inside the head of the female protagonist, and in particularly charged situations, before setting off to cross Sniper Alley, for instance, she will explicitly hum the tone of the orchestra in order to collect herself and find the courage to carry on. Thus, combining the two visual levels of the film by rhythm and sound, *1395 Days* puts forward a notion as of how music and art can work, not as an escape into an autonomous sphere of art, but rather as a means of political subjectivization, providing one with the strength to continue contesting the identity and the ontological status that one has been subjected to.<sup>13</sup>

### **Precarious bodies**

In order to capture the wider perspectives *1395 Days* raises, I will now turn to the way the film exceeds the particular context of the siege of Sarajevo.

As implied earlier in this article, Anri Sala is very careful to stress that in *1395 Days* he does not attempt to faithfully reconstruct the time of the siege, but rather to convey a certain bodily memory of it. Consequently, the film unfolds in an interstice between past and present, documentary and fiction, combining the bodily memories of the siege, as it is remembered today by the survivors, with the aforementioned widely circulated media images of the besieged city, as well as with the imagination of the artist and the spectators for that matter. The fact that the film is clearly shot in today's Sarajevo rather than in a historical re-construction of the city, and the condition that the cast not only comprises local Sarajevans but also an American conductor and a Spanish actress, further seems to suggest that the motive of the film exceeds the particular geographical and historical context of the Bosnian War. That is, rather than

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<sup>13</sup> For further reading on the potential political impact of music in war-related contexts, see for instance Pettan, 2010: 177-192. Based on case studies of musical projects conducted in relation to the wars in former Yugoslavia, Pettan calls for a broad conceptualization of music that, instead of confining it to the sphere of art, would enable the scholar to study the application and function of music – for instance the use of music as terror – in social and political contexts.

aiming at reconstructing a particular Sarajevan bodily experience or *feel*, and, in the same vein, rather than appearing as a therapeutic project allowing traumatized survivors to re-live the siege, the film, clearly highlighting its own constructed and artificial quality, seems to call attention to a shared human condition of vulnerability. Or to use the phrase of Judith Butler: a shared condition of *precariousness*.

In *Frames of War* Judith Butler sets out to rethink responsibility based on an ontology of the body and a critique of the ontology of individualism. Stressing the mutual interdependence of humans, she calls for recognition of *precariousness* as a shared condition of human life. As she phrases it: “the subject that I am, is bound to the subject I am not, we each have the power to destroy and to be destroyed, and we are bound to one another in this power and this precariousness.” (Butler, 2009: 43). To her notion of a generalized precariousness, affectivity is of crucial importance. Thus, according to Butler, responsiveness, and ultimately responsibility, is located in our affective responses to the world impinging on us. However, not least during times of war, the politically mediated, epistemological frames through which we affectively respond to the world and to the Other, tacitly work to gloss over this shared precariousness and interdependence, thereby rendering the loss of some lives grievable and others not. As Butler puts it: “War sustains its practices through acting on the senses, crafting them to apprehend the world selectively, deadening affect in response to certain images and sounds, and enlivening affective responses to others. This is why war works to undermine a sensate democracy” (Butler, 2009: 51-52). As such, her attempt to offer a rethinking of responsibility not only includes attentiveness towards the body, but indeed also entails a critique of the epistemological frames that do or do not render lives grievable.

In *1395 Days*, the experience of being cast as “non-grievable life” or as prey is effect-fully conveyed, not only through the images and the sound of the film, but also through the spatial installation of the film in the Galerie Sud at Centre Pompidou in Paris, where I encountered the work in 2012 in a solo exhibition devoted to Anri Sala. Designed by the artist himself, the exhibition juxtaposed four films of his with various sound sources as well as objects and photographs. Together, these mainly sound-based items were intended to function as a single work of art, or to be more precise, a symphony.<sup>14</sup> However, it was certainly not a kind of feel-good symphony that the spectator got to experience in the exhibition space that as a whole induced feelings of oppression, stress and claustrophobia. Organized as to visually echo the street corners that the female protagonist continuously has to cross, it was impossible to see what may be hiding behind the diagonally positioned screens upon which the four films of

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Exhibition text, Centre Pompidou, 2012.

Sala were projected. At the same time, the displaced soundtracks of the various works – be they thunderous drum rolls (*Doldrums*, 2008 and *Answer me*, 2008), the mechanical, hectic sound of a music box (*Le Clash*, 2010 and *Tlatelolco Clash*, 2011) or that of an orchestra rehearsing (*1395 Days Without Red*, 2011) – overlapped in a cacophonous soundscape inducing me as a spectator with a feeling of stress and unease. This experience was further emphasized by the panoptical twist that, echoing the surveillance of the inhabitants of *1395 Days*, the spectators could at all times be observed through the museum's wall-length window by passers-by outside.

Thus exposed to a persistent sensation of stress and claustrophobia, the spectators of the exhibition were called on not only to *reflect* upon but also to sensorily experience the profound precariousness that we ultimately share with the Other embodied by the haunted beings portrayed in the film. However, in accordance with the earlier mentioned ambiguity of the film with regard to time and space, my suggestion would be to consider this ambiguity an invitation to expand the scope from that of the particular siege of Sarajevo and to think about contemporary situations of war in which similar exclusionary mechanisms and instances of *manhunt* are at stake.<sup>15</sup> That is, the film does not limit itself to giving an account of the particular events of the siege of Sarajevo; instead it seeks to transmit a universal bodily experience of living under the condition of war turned into manhunt.

### **Critical Art in the Late Modern War Paradigm**

According to my reading, *1395 Days* clearly comes across as a work that critically questions the distribution of the sensible, and not least the active crafting of the senses, taking place in times of war. However, in accordance with a salient trend in international contemporary art and theatre engaging with today's wars, the direct oppositional strategy that defined so much of the anti-war art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>16</sup> does not seem to be an option for Sala. That is, he in no way attempts to reduce the complex bio-political practices of subjectivization going on in relation to war to a simple question of being either for or against war. Quite on the contrary, his point of departure seems to be that there is no "outside" to the condition of war.

Here, Sala is in agreement with a range of thinkers and political scientists, such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Mary Kaldor, and Herfried Münkler, who all contend that within the framework of the late modern paradigm, that is, the paradigm

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<sup>15</sup> A case in point could be the use of drones in what used to be called The War on Terror. Here, the *local* hunting ground of Sarajevo has been transformed into a *global*, unbounded hunting ground. That is, a hunting ground where allegedly non-grievable lives are permanently exposed to the mercy of unmanned aerial vehicles, operated by remote pilots thousands of miles away (See also Chamayou, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> See for instance Bruckner et al. (1984) and Brandon (2007).



ensuing from the termination of the Cold War and the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001, war no longer seems to constitute a state of emergency, but rather a permanent, global condition.<sup>17</sup> As Hardt and Negri phrase it: “Today [war is] becoming a permanent social relation [...] war, that is to say, is becoming the primary organizing principle of society, and politics merely one of its means of guises. What appears as civil peace, then, really puts an end to one form of war and opens the way for another” (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 12). One consequence of the latter form of war is, then, that the distinction between war and peace seems to erode. This is to say, different from the modern, Clausewitzian idea of war, where you had nation states fighting against each other in bounded, military battles, today the logic of war seems to have pervaded all aspects of the social order, thereby effacing the distinction between battlefield and civil society, war and peace. Aiming at ultimately creating and controlling the very social order and the subjects inhabiting it, the global wars of late modernity thus cannot be delimited, neither in temporal terms (they have no clear beginning and no final end) nor spatially (they take place on the battlefield as well as in civil society, and in cyberspace).

Viewed from a dramaturgical point of view it is, in fact, possible to compare the structural course of the template of the modern, Clausewitzian idea of war to the dramaturgical scheme suggested by Aristotle, and since cultivated as the norm of modern drama, and for that matter the so-called Hollywood film dramaturgy.<sup>18</sup> Both contain a clearly defined beginning (the declaration of war), middle (the events of war), and end (the settlement of war), as well as various turning points, including the deciding *peripeteia* (the battle ultimately deciding the outcome of the conflict). As opposed to this, the dramaturgy of the late modern war paradigm neither contains a clearly defined beginning, middle or end, nor does it include an ultimate turning point. Instead, it offers a diffuse hotchpotch of globally overlapping wars and conflicts that most of all seem to be organized according to a flat, relational network structure.<sup>19</sup> As if to imply that in the face of today’s war scape it is no longer possible to resort to the “safe”, linear narrative of the modern idea of war, *1395 Days* thus renounces from deploying a cause-and-event, plot driven dramaturgy. Instead it organizes itself according to the initially mentioned loop structure, indicating that there is no ending to the condition of war depicted in the film, only an eternal return of the same, as it were.

However, as I have intended to demonstrate in the previous, *1395 Days* does not merely reproduce the structure and the logic of the late modern war paradigm. Instead,

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<sup>17</sup> See Hardt and Negri (2004); Kaldor (2006); Münkler (2005).

<sup>18</sup> See Aristotle (1996); Hiltunen (2002).

<sup>19</sup> See for instance Kaldor and Vashee (1997: 18-19); Kaldor (2006: 78); and Hardt & Negri, who suggest to refer to the present condition as being subjected to global “imperial, civil war” or even World War 4 (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 37).

it seeks to challenge this very logic from *within* by revisiting, reembodying, and renegotiating the collective memory of the siege of Sarajevo. That is, by staging practices of disidentification with the identities assigned to the population by the Bosnian Serbian forces, the film, on the one hand, refers in a semi-documentary manner to a certain strain of non-military resistance carried out by the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra. On the other, it transgresses the local context of Sarajevo in order to, within a broader framework of war today, assert the validity of a basic human equality positioned beyond the brutal logic and the asymmetric power relationship implied in the hunting scheme. Thus juxtaposing the exclusionary logic of *la police* with the logic of equality, the film manages, I contend, to question and reconfigure the order of the sensible, the perspective governing what is considered human and what not. This reconfiguration – this way of resistance – seems, in turn, to influence the earlier mentioned anticipatory logic of fear. Thus, in the face of the practices of disidentification carried out by the orchestra members, the fear of the present no longer seems to inevitably foreclose the possibility of a future different to the (fearful) present. Another future populated by not yet defined political subjectivities in fact seems possible to envisage. Ultimately, then, the urge in contemporary art to revisit images, mental as well as material, of former wars, such as the Bosnian War, is just as directed towards the future as towards the past. That is, rather than being about picturing or remembering how *it really was*, the artistic practices seem interested and invested in the possible imagining of a different future.

To conclude, I would like to propose that while neither artistic practices such as Sala's, nor the acts of the orchestra depicted, are able to overthrow the ruling power relations, they may none the less function as persistent, minor acts of resistance. As acts that potentially leading to processes of political subjectivization insist on questioning the dominant interpretive frameworks that – not least in times of armed conflict – impose themselves on us, urging us to repeat their exclusionary and dehumanizing logic.

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